

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 10 TEL AVIV 001191

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR XXXX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
USCINCENT MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO FOR ICD
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL
PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [IS KMDR MEDIA REACTION REPORT](#)
SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

Please note: No Israel Media Reaction report Tuesday,
March 28, 2006, Israeli Election Day.

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

- [1](#)1. Mideast
- [1](#)2. US-Israel Relations

Election polls:

A Yediot/Mina Zemach (Dahaf Institute) poll held on Sunday:
-"Were elections for the Knesset held today, for whom would you vote?" (Results in Knesset seats -- in brackets, results of Yediot's poll published on March 24.)
--Kadima 34 (36); Labor Party 21 (21); Likud 13 (14); Yisrael Beiteinu 12 (11); Shas 11 (11); National Union-National Religious Party 9 (9); Arab parties 7 (7); United Torah Judaism 6 (5) Meretz 5 (6); Pensioners' Party 2 (the party was not represented in any previous poll).

Maariv printed the results of a TNS/Teleseker Polling Institute survey:
-"Were elections for the Knesset held today, for whom would you vote?" (Results in Knesset seats -- in brackets, results of a Maariv poll conducted on March 23.)
--Kadima 34 (37); Labor Party 17 (21); Likud 12 (14); Yisrael Beiteinu 12 (10); Shas 12 (9); National Union-National Religious Party 11 (11); Arab parties 7-11 (9); United Torah Judaism 5-6 (5); Meretz 5 (5); Pensioners' Party 2.
According to Maariv, the right-wing and religious parties are close to forming an obstructing bloc (54-59 Knesset seats).

Channel 10-TV and Ha'aretz published the results of a survey conducted by Prof. Camil Fuchs of the Amanet Group's Dialogue Institute:
-"Were elections for the Knesset held today, for whom would you vote?" (Results in Knesset seats -- in brackets, results of poll conducted on March 23.)
--Kadima 36 (36); Labor Party 18 (17); Likud 14 (14); Shas 11 (11); Arab parties 8 (8); National Union-National Religious Party 12 (9); Yisrael Beiteinu 7 (9); United Torah Judaism 6 (6); Meretz 6 (6); Pensioners' Party 2.

The Jerusalem Post published the results of a Smith Institute poll conducted for the newspaper:
-"Were elections for the Knesset held today, for whom would you vote?" (Results in Knesset seats -- in brackets, results of poll published on March 24.)
--Kadima 33-34 (34); Labor Party 20-21 (19-20); Likud 15 (15); Yisrael Beiteinu 11 (11); Shas 10 (11); National Union-National Religious Party 9-10 (10); Arab parties 9 (9-10); United Torah Judaism 6 (5); Meretz 6 (5).

According to a Maagar Mohot poll commissioned by Channel 2-TV, Avigdor Lieberman's Yisrael Beiteinu passed the Likud, 15 seats to 12, to move to third

place behind Kadima (34) and Labor (19).

Ha'aretz wrote that "defying all logic," the number of floating voters -- people who have not yet decided which party to vote for -- rose sharply this week, to 28 seats, from 18 seats last week. Maariv found that the floating votes equal ten Knesset seats.

Key stories in the media:

During the weekend, all media led with the lead up to Tuesday's elections. The media quoted senior Kadima leaders, including FM Tzipi Livni, as saying that their party had too quickly concluded that it had won the elections. On Sunday, the media reported that Peres, no. 2 in Kadima, minimized the importance of Labor Chairman Amir Peretz's achievements, while Peretz raised the question of Peres's participation in Kadima, some of whose senior members took part in a heated right-wing Jerusalem rally prior to the late PM Yitzhar Rabin's assassination. Yediot and Ynet, the leading news web site associated with the newspaper, quoted Yitzhak Rabin's son Yuval as saying that he endorses Acting PM Ehud Olmert.

The Jerusalem Post quoted senior Kadima member Haim Ramon as saying on Sunday that the PA would have six to twelve months to comply with Israeli demands before a Kadima-led government would begin unilateral withdrawals from the West Bank.

All media reported that Palestinian PM-designate Ismail Haniyeh is slated to present his cabinet to the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) today, and that the new Palestinian government is expected to be sworn in on Wednesday. All media quoted Haniyeh as saying Sunday: "We don't want a whirlpool of blood on this region. We want the rights and dignity of our people. We also want to put an end to this complicated conflict that has been going on for decades." The Jerusalem Post reported that Haniyeh lashed out at Olmert's refusal to negotiate with his government. Israel Radio quoted senior GOI sources in Jerusalem as saying that the purpose of Haniyeh's remarks is to sedate Israel and the international community in order to win legitimacy. The radio quoted IDF Chief of Staff Dan Halutz as saying that Haniyeh's remarks could signify Hamas's eventual recognition of Israel and the agreements the PA signed with it, and the cessation of terrorism. On Sunday, Yediot reported that on Saturday, PA Chairman [President] Mahmoud Abbas sent a letter to Haniyeh, in which he wrote: "The election results do not constitute the breaking of all the agreements and commitments of the Palestinian Authority or the breaking of all the political plans of the PLO, the organization which represents and is the source of legitimate authority for the Palestinians in their homeland and in the Diaspora. From the moment that the government is established, I will demand a second time that you adopt the principles that I presented to you in the letter of appointment and that you carry out the required amendments to the government's basic principles." The media reported that Haniyeh ignored Abbas's statements. In its lead story Sunday, The Jerusalem Post quoted Abbas as saying on Saturday that he would use his "constitutional powers" against the new Hamas cabinet unless it altered its political program and honored all agreements with Israel.

Maariv devoted the main feature of its daily supplement to the "almost paranoid bureaucracy" encountered by Israeli applicants for US non-immigrant visas. The newspaper cited what applicants view as the unfriendliness of the Internet forms referred to by the US Embassy's web site. Maariv cited a response by the Embassy that the visa application system is very efficient, despite some technical flaws.

Major media reported that today IDF troops killed a Palestinian gunman firing rocket-propelled grenades into Israel from the northern Gaza Strip. Leading media quoted Palestinian sources as saying that another gunman was wounded by Israeli fire during the incident. Media reported that earlier today, Israeli aircraft fired two missiles at a car carrying four members of the Fatah-affiliated Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades in Gaza City, wounding one of the men and a bystander. Leading media reported that IDF troops killed a Palestinian teenager in the central Gaza Strip on Sunday. Leading media reported that on Sunday, security guards at Tel

Aviv's central bus station apprehended a 24-year-old Palestinian trying to enter the bus station with a concealed dagger. Major media reported that the Shin Bet recently thwarted two attempts by Islamic Jihad to stage terror attacks in Israeli territory. Hatzofe cited the British newspaper The Sunday Times as saying that the Israeli Ministry of Defense plans an important military operation in Palestinian cities in the West Bank after the elections.

Ha'aretz and Israel Radio reported that starting today, the IDF plans to turn the Qalandya checkpoint north of Jerusalem into a border crossing into Israel.

Ha'aretz reported that on Sunday, several Palestinians and an American volunteer in the West Bank filed complaints with the police, accusing settlers of violence toward Palestinians in the Hebron area on Saturday, after three people were wounded in two separate incidents.

On Sunday, all media reported that a young Labor Party activist was electrocuted on Saturday after he climbed an electric pole in order to take down a Likud campaign poster.

The Jerusalem Post reported that while most English-speaking voters interviewed randomly in the Jerusalem area said that there were voting for right-wing parties, a majority of Israelis from English-speaking countries living in the Tel Aviv area seem to be leaning predominantly toward left-wing parties ahead of Tuesday's election.

On Sunday, Ha'aretz reported that on Friday at the pretrial hearing for Steven Rosen and Keith Weissman, two former lobbyists with the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, U.S. District Judge T.S. Ellis questioned the constitutionality of a law under which Rosen and Weissman have been charged with receiving and disclosing national defense information to reporters and foreign diplomats. Ha'aretz also reported that the prosecution announced that it would object to the defense request to subpoena witnesses from Israel, including a former Israeli Embassy employee, Naor Gilon, to whom Rosen passed on information. The judge insisted that the defense ascertain whether the witnesses would be prepared to attend, or at least to provide affidavits, and only then would the court rule.

Maariv reported that a teacher who had served in the past as an interpreter for American troops in the western Iraqi town of Ramadi was decapitated in front of his students for allegedly collaborating with the CIA and the Mossad. Major Israeli media quoted Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice as saying in an

SIPDIS
interview with NBC that the US might reduce the number of its troops in Iraq.

Maariv reported that over recent months, the State Department has employed Israeli Attorney Shamai Leibowitz as an instructor in Israeli affairs at the Departments' schools of diplomacy. Maariv quoted Israeli sources in Washington as saying that Leibowitz, a strident anti-Israeli critic who defended Fatah leader Marwan Barghouti, is not a direct USG hire.

On Sunday, Ha'aretz reported that Jewish voters in Illinois may stop supporting Illinois' Democratic Governor Ron Blagojevich because he did not dismiss a female activist in Louis Farrakhan's Nation of Islam from his state's Hate Crimes Commission.

Maariv reported that the US subsidiaries of the Israeli energy companies Alon and Delek will supply fuel to the US Army.

1. Mideast:

Summary:

Editor-in-Chief Amnon Dankner wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv: "Israel has a rare window of opportunity, for what remains of George Bush's term of office, to determine, with American agreement, permanent borders with a solid Jewish majority."

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized: "It must be hoped that Labor under Peretz's leadership will be the senior coalition partner in the next government."

The Director of the Interdisciplinary Center's Global Research in International Affairs Center, columnist Barry Rubin, wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post: "The Hamas regime will facilitate a terrorist war on Israel while disclaiming responsibility."

The Jerusalem Post editorialized: "In the past, Jerusalem has been wary of American calls for a 'reassessment'.... Yet this is precisely the reflex that itself should be reconsidered in light of dramatic changes on the ground."

Block Quotes:

I. "In Favor of Olmert"

Editor-in-Chief Amnon Dankner wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv (March 27): "Israel has a rare window of opportunity, for what remains of George Bush's term of office, to determine, with American agreement, permanent borders with a solid Jewish majority.... Olmert is right when he says the time has come for us to take our fate into our own hands. We are stuck with the dangerous consequences of two historic errors: the occupation and the settlements at the beginning, and the wretched Oslo agreements later. The time has come for us to break out of this entanglement.... For three years Ehud Olmert has been pointing in a revolutionary direction. By doing so he has shown courage and integrity and taken great risks. He was a pioneer of the disengagement idea and the idea of creating a large centrist party which would make it come true. In effect he is fighting Israel's second war of independence -- the war for liberation from the burden of the occupation and the settlements, and for our independence as a state with a solid Jewish majority which serves the interests of the great majority of the public, and is not led towards the edge of the abyss by an extremist minority."

II. "Peretz's Revolution"

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (March 27): "[Labor Party Chairman Amir Peretz's] understanding of the connection between the economy and foreign policy, between irrational investments over the Green Line and neglect of the development towns [new immigrant towns established in the 1950s, especially in the border areas, rural regions, and periphery of Israel], between large salary gaps and growing xenophobia -- as well as the fact that Peretz, in contrast to the leading prime ministerial candidate, has been working to end the occupation since the early 1970s, even when his entire social milieu thought otherwise -- testify to his independence, courage and ability to foresee consequences.... It must be hoped that Labor under Peretz's leadership will be the senior coalition partner in the next government, and that its chairman will receive a significant portfolio, which will also help him gain governmental experience. Peretz will seek to conduct negotiations with the Palestinians before deciding on another unilateral withdrawal, but has promised to support any withdrawal or evacuation of settlements if it becomes clear that negotiations are unfeasible."

III. "Hamas Governs"

The Director of the Interdisciplinary Center's Global Research in International Affairs Center, columnist Barry Rubin, wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (March 27): "How will the Hamas regime handle violence against Israel? Let's get real. The most 'moderate' policy Hamas will follow is to let Fatah, the PFLP and Islamic Jihad attack Israel on a daily basis. No terrorist will be stopped beforehand, or imprisoned afterwards. The Hamas regime will facilitate a terrorist war on Israel while disclaiming responsibility. It will maintain a cease-fire as a movement while carrying out a war policy as a government. Is this sufficient to provide a fig leaf for European aid? Let's hope not."

IV. "Time For a Real 'Reassessment'"

The Jerusalem Post editorialized (March 27): "The day after the elections this week, America's top Mideast hands -- Deputy National Security Adviser Elliott Abrams and Assistant Secretary of State David Welch -- will arrive to assess the new lay of the landscape. Regardless of the election outcome, the new situation in the region is an opportunity for an overdue reassessment of American policy. In the past,

Jerusalem has been wary of American calls for a 'reassessment,' taken as a code word for more active diplomatic efforts, which in turn were assumed to mean more pressure on Israel. Yet this is precisely the reflex that itself should be reconsidered in light of dramatic changes on the ground. In Israel, our election will clearly be a referendum on unilateralism as a strategy, both as it was carried out in Gaza and as Ehud Olmert has promised its application in Judea and Samaria [i.e. the West Bank]. Though the degree of endorsement by the electorate is yet to be seen, it seems more than possible that unilateralism will, even in the absence of Ariel Sharon, be ratified as the organizing principle of Israeli policy.... Kadima's strategy is essentially to force statehood on the Palestinians, even in the absence of a peace agreement.... This new situation presents no small challenge for US policy which has, since 1967, been based on producing two states through a land-for-peace trade. Explicitly or not, UN Security Council Resolution 242, the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty, the Madrid Conference, Oslo, the 2000 Camp David summit, and the Roadmap have all attempted to steer the parties toward a negotiated peace along the same lines. What, however, should the US make of a situation that is moving closer to two states but, at the same time, further from negotiations? How can a 'peace process' be reconstructed around this new reality?.... We have come to a time for Plan B: a plan not built on the main assumption of the old plan, namely that the Arab world had accepted Israel's right to exist."

12. US-Israel Relations:

Summary:

Columnist Shlomo Gazit, a former head of IDF Intelligence, wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv: "Our basic premise must view the continued strategic partnership between Jerusalem and Washington as an asset of supreme value; we must prepare for the post-Iraqi era in the US."

Block Quotes:

"Red Warning Light in the American Arena"

Columnist Shlomo Gazit, a former head of IDF Intelligence, wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv (March 27): "Two respected American professors, John Mearsheimer of the University of Chicago and Stephen Walt of Harvard University, collaborated in the publication of a joint study on the pro-Israel lobby in the US.... There is no doubt that a careful examination of the many assertions brought in the paper shows a clearly one-sided and anti-Israel approach, a total disregard for the background, for the existing threats and for the motives for Israel's policy and actions.... Nevertheless, I believe that we should thank the two professors for the red warning light they have lit. We must all prepare for the post-Iraqi era of the US. There is a substantial probability that the military campaign will end with a failure of the US attempt to establish a stable and democratic regime in Iraq, and this will have severe implications for America's standing in the region in general. At that point, incisive discussions will ensue: Who is responsible for entangling the US in the unnecessary war? It will be easy to turn Israel into a scapegoat. In a few more weeks, a new government will be formed in Israel. We must make a thorough examination of our relations with the US: Our basic premise must view the continued strategic partnership between Jerusalem and Washington as an asset of supreme value; we must prepare for the post-Iraqi era in the US. We will not have unlimited time at our disposal, and must be first to offer initiatives, actions and solutions in our arena, as long as the conditions are convenient for us; and at the same time, Jerusalem should make the Jewish lobby operating in the US Congress understand that our strength will not last forever."

JONES